



WREXHAM LOCAL ACCESS FORUM CONFIRMED MINUTES

**Thirty-seventh meeting of the Forum held at Nant Mill, Coedpoeth, Wrexham
on Friday 14th May 2010 at 2.00 pm**

12/10 ATTENDANCE & APOLOGIES

Attendance:

PRESIDING OFFICER AND SECRETARY

Carla McCusker

VICE-CHAIR

Sue Gittins (SG)

MEMBERS

Peter Cade (PC)
John Evans (JE)
Martin Howorth (MH)
Gerald Moss (GM)
Janet Williams (JM)
Mary Roberts (MR)
Gwynfor Jones (GJ)
Shelagh Roberts (SR)

NON MEMBERS

Sean Hanratty (SH) - WCBC
Sion Roberts (SR) - WCBC
Jean Rosenfeld (JR)

APOLOGIES - MEMBERS

Mabyn Pickering (MP), Natalie Edwards (NE), John Cooper-Poole (JCP), Tim Stratton (TS), Guy Springett (GS), Mike Crawshaw (MC).

APOLOGIES - NON-MEMBERS

Alun Price, Richard Sumner

13/10 Attendance and Apologies

Attendance and apologies were noted as above. SG chaired the meeting in MP's absence and apologised that the walk had to be cancelled on this occasion.

A warm welcome was extended to Jean Rosenfeld, National Representative for the Local Access Forums in Wales and Chair of the Flintshire LAF.



14/10 Matters of the Meeting held on 5 February 2010***Improving Riding Opportunities Project***

GJ referred to item 07/10 in the previous minutes: 'Improving Riding Opportunities Project'. GJ asked that his concerns be noted, commenting that there should have been more consultation with the WLAf about the project's proposals. The safety of routes was questioned, particularly on main roads and narrow roads with high banks / S bends. JW added that she was surprised that major roads are being used, commenting that quieter roads would have been better for safer riding routes. Both GJ and JW felt that better riding routes could have been designated and that too many signs had been erected. JW stated that she had been asking for a sign to be replaced on the B450 for approximately two years and the work had not yet been carried out.

MH responded to the above concerns by stating that the project was driven and informed by the horseriding community, who wanted better access to roads. MH advised that the Highways Department were also involved in the project, advising on the safety of routes. With regard to signage, MH explained that the roads required signage in order to direct horseriders and to warn motorists.

SG added that AVOW and Northern Marches were also involved in the project and reiterated that the horseriding community selected the routes concerned. SG assured members that funding was spent advising on safety issues as well as signage.

Erbistock Kissing Gate

Reference was made to the kissing gate at Erbistock (map reference 355430). It was agreed that the Rights of Way Department will look into this matter further.

Stile on A528

SR advised that, on visiting the site at Overton bridge (coming out of Rosehill Park onto the A528), it had been decided that the existing stile was dangerous as it was too close to the road. The stile has since been replaced by a kissing gate.

14/10 Chair's Report

The Chair's report was circulated to the group in MP's absence.

Reference was made to the Legacy old railway route. MP had made a formal request to the National Grid in February, asking them to dedicate a path within the sub-station site. An official response has not yet been received however MP had been advised from another source that the request would probably not be granted, as sub-stations can be terrorist targets. SG advised that MP is concerned that a lot of time has been put into this and asked members whether they would like MP to pursue it any further. Following discussion amongst the group, it was agreed that the best way forward would be for MP to continue to pursue with the utilities company and also to contact the Community Council.

15/10 Secretary's Report

- Claims – Please ensure that any outstanding claims are sent to the Secretary promptly. The Audit Department in the Local Authority have a 3 month cut off period for receipt of claims.
- LAF guidance booklets have now been posted on the web. The link has recently been emailed out to all members.
- Definitive Map – MP's copy is now available to view in the new Wrexham library.
- Congratulations to Natalie Edwards who has recently given birth to a beautiful baby girl called Murran Olivia Edwards.
- LAF Conference for Secretaries and Chairs – This event will take place on Thursday 20th May 2010 at Builth Wells. The Chair and Secretary will be attending and there is one spare space if anyone wishes to attend. GM expressed an interest in attending.

Action

Secretary to book place for GM.

16/10 Report from Access Rangers - (Sion Roberts)

The volunteer website is almost ready to go live on the Council's website. It should be up and running by the end of June. Hopefully this should increase the number volunteers we have.

Chirk Community Council have agreed to take part in this years footpath project scheme. A meeting has been planned for the 26th of May in Chirk, where volunteers will be sought to survey the paths.

Rangers are currently identifying and working on a list of maintenance work that will be done as part of the 2010/2011 Rights of Way Improvement Plan. The list needs to be supplied to CCW by 24th May.

There was a good turn out for the first guided walk of the year. 17 people turned up for the Mountain Reservoirs walk on April the 8th. The next guided walk will be on June the 3rd around Ruabon and Gardden Woods.

17/10 Jean Rosenfeld – National Representative for the Local Access Forums in Wales

A warm welcome was extended to Jean Rosenfeld.

Introduction

JR introduced himself and informed the group that there are 20 Local Access Forums across Wales. The CCW is nominally in charge of co-ordinating the LAFs. JR's main responsibilities include organising the LAF Annual Conference and representing all LAFs across Wales. JR's main role is to share work, concerns and good practice amongst LAFs. JR will write to Elected Members on behalf of all LAFs when there are consensual concerns amongst LAFs across Wales on particular issues. JR advised that some LAFs set up sub-committees to look at specific issues. Specific members of the LAF have devolved responsibility and work on behalf of the entire LAF. Where queries arise within sub-committee groups, they are brought to the wider LAF group for discussion and agreement. JR advised that there are some common threads amongst LAFs across Wales.

Specific reference was made to the following:

Glastir

Currently, there are many concerns across LAFs with regard to Glastir, as this continues to be a grey area. It is hoped that more information will be available at the forthcoming LAF Annual Conference on 20th May 2010.

Community Councils

Specific reference was made to Community Councils, which some LAFs are very actively involved with. Community Councils can promote LAFs and assist with various issues. One area of particular interest relates to maintaining Tir Gorfal and whether Community Councils can take paths over and maintain them. The Camarthenshire LAF has visited Community Councils in their area and given presentations about their LAF.

Dogs in the Countryside

JR stated that whilst LAFs welcome free access to the countryside and the number of irresponsible dog owners is small, there are implications of letting a dog loose in the countryside. JR commented that there is various conflicting advice, however generally there is agreement around the problems being down to a lack of education.

All LAFs are pressing the CCW and the Welsh Assembly to increase awareness amongst the general public. The LA can issue dog control orders and apply restrictions, such as the one recently implemented in Camarthenshire where only 3 dogs are permitted on a lead at one time. However, problems can arise in terms of the cost of enforcing orders.

GJ advised that Farmers Unions have looked carefully at the issue and have taken measures to educate people.

SG advised that the key messages from the LAF Chairs meeting in February was the need to increase awareness via education, to pursue insurance for dogs with the kennel clubs and to bring in compulsory microchipping.

MH added that there are also increasing pressures and problems with dogs in parks, particularly when people do not know how to control their dogs. Reference was made to the 'Advice for Dog Owners' leaflets produced by the Amenity Wards Department in the Local Authority. GJ proposed that a paragraph be prepared for the 'Connect' magazine which is circulated to all homes across Wrexham.

Action

MH / Chair to contact the Amenity Wards Department to request that a paragraph with advice to dog owners be included in the Connect magazine.

Off-roading – Off-roading is a further area of concern amongst LAFs in Wales is off roading.

ROWIP Funding – LAFs are very concerned about ROWIP funding, particularly in terms of how Local Authority's are dealing with cuts in funding.

Gating Orders – JR is currently undertaking enquiries to find out how many gating orders are in place across Wales. LAFs have felt that they should be consulted before gating orders are issued in order to decide whether it is the most appropriate option.

Cross-border issues and collaboration – JR advised that progress has been slow and there is some conflict between Local Authorities. Flintshire had proposed a joint meeting with Wrexham to discuss larger strategic issues, however SG explained that whilst an exploratory meeting was held between Wrexham and Flintshire earlier in the year, the Wrexham LAF does not wish to pursue a joint meeting at this stage. JR informed members that Denbighshire have now appointed a Secretary and LAF posts have been advertised. It is hoped that a new Forum will be established in Denbighshire over the next few months.

JR stated that by exchanging information, concerns and views, LAFs can assist each other to move forward.

Thanks were extended to JR for attending the meeting and for providing an update on national LAF issues.

18/10 Richard Sumner – Landscape Planning Officer

Richard Sumner was unable to attend the meeting on this occasion. It is hoped that he will be in attendance at the next meeting to provide an overview on areas of outstanding beauty in Wrexham.

19/10 Countryside Council for Wales (Alun Price)

Alun Price was unable to attend the meeting on this occasion.

20/10 Matters arising from minutes

4x4s in the Countryside – MC had requested that 4x4s in the Countryside be discussed at the next meeting. GJ informed members that a meeting has been scheduled regarding illegal offroading on 17th June 2010 at the Brenig Centre. Information from that meeting will be brought to the next WLAFL meeting, if available.

Budgeting - Reference was made to ROWIP funding. MH advised that the funding is technically called capital money and this cannot be spent on anything other than Rights of Way. GJ referred to CROW funding, questioning whether this money was ring fenced. MH stated that the money was not ring fenced.

21/10 Any Other Business

- **Local Development Plan** – TS had requested that the WLAFL be consulted on the forthcoming Local Development Plan. A letter had been received from the Local Authority confirming that the WLAFL are consultees. It was noted that there are opportunities for LAFs and ROW to influence not just work on existing footpaths but also new development schemes.
- **Modification Orders** – Thanks were extended to SH for ensuring that the LAF is informed and consulted in relation to modification orders, and for speeding the process up. SG commented that members need to come to an agreement as to how the LAF plans to action the orders that are now being circulated on a regular basis. It was proposed that individual forum members can visit the site concerned and respond accordingly, however SG asked members to ensure that when responding, that they make it clear that they are responding as an individual and not on behalf of the forum as a whole. It was agreed that when modification orders are issued, the Chair would contact the appropriate LAF member in the area concerned to discuss any issues.
- **Dog Day Afternoon** – A 'Dog Day Afternoon' has been planned for 19th August 2010 at Alyn Waters visitor Centre, 11 a.m. until approximately 4 p.m. There will be dog microchipping at only £10 each, and entertainments including an agility demonstration and fun dog classes with rosettes to 7th place (enter on the day, £2 per class). There will also be some doggy trade stands and demos/advice, and the opportunity to enter classes for a 'good citizen' award. Please contact Mary Roberts if you are interested in attending.

22/10 Items for Next Agenda

- Community Path Project, Broughton (Alison Whitley)
- 4x4s in the Countryside
- Areas of Outstanding Beauty (Richard Sumner)

23/10 Date and Location of Next Meeting

20th August 2010, Village Hall, Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog, 1.30pm

